Baker's Corner Valet's Family Reunion Scene

8 JUL 7 1975

BAKERS CORNER, Ind. (AP) More than 300 descendant of an African-born Negro valet Sunday concluded the 52nd annual family reunion in Hamilton County, about 30 miles north of Indianapolis.

Their valet ancestor had served an Englishman named Lord Russell in the early 1700s on his extensive plantation holdings in the Carolina provinces. When the Englishman died suddenly of a disease contracted on an ocean voyage, it was discovered he had no heirs and the valet assumed his name and control of the properties.

+ + +

The valet's great-grandson Eliah Roberts brought the new Russell family to a site in northwestern Hamilton County in 1830 where a group of large, connected farms became their home. The community became known as the Roberts Settlement and at one time contained 400 persons.

After the second Lord Russell gained control over the plantations, he married a Cherokee Indian woman from a nearby tribe. From that union, a tight-knit community of his wife's relatives, free Negroes and white English settlers was formed.

+ + +

Mrs. Jerry Granger of Indianapolis, a family spokesman, said it is the combination of Englishman, America Indian and Negro that gives the Roberts Settlement its heritage and pride. Now only seven families live on the farms.

A simple white wood, non-denominational church stands at the center of the settlement and serves as a meeting place for the reunions and the Burial Association, a group which keeps up contact among the descendants.